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Wonder Stories

Persia

Collected by

MRS. WILLIAM E. CLOW

Wonder Stories—Persia

Persia, as never before, is looking to America for inspiration and help. Is this not proven, in material things, by the fact that the Persian government through its representative in Washington asked that five Americans be selected to go to Persia for a term of not less than three years and assist in reorganizing the country's finances? Surely this might be considered a very direct tribute to our missionaries, who comprise most of the English-speaking people, and who have demonstrated by their lives an ideal that inspires confidence.

All who know the situation agree that the great need today is work for the Moslem races. The Rev. John Newton Wright, D.D., writing to the editor of "The Kurdistan Missionary," says: "The real genuine mission work that seeks to meet the need will send workers for the vast and almost untouched Mohammedan field. There are nearly two million Turkish-speaking Moslems in the field of the Presbyterian Mission, and nearly as many Kurds, in a section of Persia south and west of Urumia. As yet no church has

undertaken work for these Kurds by organizing a mission for them. The Kurds are to Persia what the Scotch were to England and Ireland. They are a brave, manly, vigorous race of Indo-European stock, but wild, uneducated, uncivilized and without Christ and His Spirit. Their need is great."

Told by Mrs. Bertha M. Cochran.

It was the custom, as the days grew longer, to hold daily prayers on the roof of the Urumia hospital at sunset. One night some of the servants of a Kurdish sheik were on the roof at prayers, armed to the teeth as usual. They presently rose in the midst of our hymn, squinted at the setting sun to get their bearings, stripped off their daggers, cartridge belts, shoes and turbans, and having faced towards Mecca, having bowed to the ground several times, lifted up their hands to Heaven, and mumbled the prescribed formula, they rehabilitated themselves, and were prepared to listen to the leader. He was telling them how Christ sent His disciples, two and two before Him, to tell of His coming, and had committed this proclamation of His arrival to His disciples in these days, too. One of these Kurds, a rather pleasant-faced

young brave, half laughingly replied to the leader—"Well, I think your preachers and our Mullahs are likely to go to hell then, for you are not doing it. I never heard of Christ before. Does He really say He is God?" Being able to read he crept over and looked on the Book to make sure, and he kept the Testament.

Told by Mrs. S. G. Wilson.

A Moslem villager once had a dream in which he thought the Virgin Mary appeared to him. He knew that she was the mother of Jesus and so went to an Armenian carpenter, working in the village, to ask him about his religion. People in Persia attach much importance to dreams and he thought this a divine call for him to become a Christian. The Armenian told him he knew little about his religion, but if he would come with him when he returned to his home in Tabriz, he would take him to his neighbor, a Protestant preacher, who could tell him all about Christianity. So, some time after Mr. Wilson, to his great surprise, had a call from the Armenian, bringing a Moslem to learn of Christ. It was an interesting experience, and he found the man, though ignorant, eager to hear; and after talking with him, gave a Testament

to him to take home. Thus the Light dawned upon him, as he read and pondered on the wonderful story, with no other teacher but the Word and the Spirit. As he began to tell others of the Book, opposition arose, and it was taken from him.

We visited his village on a tour and he came running after us, as we were leaving, to beg secretly for another book. Between the high walls of two vineyards we stopped to unload and get it out for him; and, after a little talk and prayer, left him again alone, but rejoicing in his treasure. The more he read the stronger became his faith, and the light could not be hid under a bushel. Persecution began, his wife left him, his life was threatened and he fled to Tabriz.

I was startled one morning in passing Mr. Wilson's study door to see a man on the floor at his feet, weeping and trembling with fear. It was Ali Oscar, our inquirer from the village. A policeman happened to be at our door on other business, and Ali Oscar, fleeing to us for protection, supposed he was there to arrest him and had impulsively run in, and, in Oriental fashion, cast himself at Mr. Wilson's feet. He was much relieved to learn that the policeman knew nothing of him. Being a gardener he found work in Mr. Easton's garden, and for some time lived

in his employ unmolested. Attending the church service and receiving private instruction he became stronger in the faith and again his witnessing for Christ brought him into persecution and danger. He was seized and beaten, but counted it joy to suffer for Christ's name. We knew that we could not protect him and that the death penalty is still in force for any Moslem who leaves Islam; so he was assisted to escape to Russia. For many years we did not see him. His brother, returning from Tiflis, called, and in speaking of him, deplored his "bad religion," but, on being asked if it made him "a bad man," answered, "No, he is like an angel." We heard from others of his joining the Protestant congregation in Tiflis, of his success as a gardener and of his marriage with a German girl.

One more scene—when we were stopping a few hours at Tiflis and visiting the Swedish missionaries, I saw a fair, buxom German woman come in the yard, trundling a baby carriage with the sweetest, fattest baby boy lying inside. The baby gave me an excuse to stop and compliment the proud, young mother, and, after a few questions, I found this was Ali Oscar's wife. What a happy meeting it was! As I looked at the beautiful baby in his white dress and blue ribbons I thought what a wonder story it is

that this baby, born and baptized a Christian, is the son of the Moslem villager, Ali Oscar, who, through a dream and a book found Christ.

Told by Mrs. Charles R. Pittman.

It was in a village that had been visited several times by missionaries, that one day two who were itinerating again stopped at the home of an old woman. After unloading their goods and some refreshments they were ready for work. Unfortunately the men of the house were away, but there were some women and boys ready to listen. The missionary talked to them from John XIV emphasizing: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." The old woman of the house said it had been so long since anyone had come that just that morning she had prayed: "Oh, God, bring the ladies." After reading and talking to her, she said: "It has been so long since my ears have heard the sweet words." She said she believed that Christ is the Son of God.

Told by Miss Lillie B. Beaber.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

In a lively town on the Caspian Sea in Persia, a mother died. A lowly, unedu-

cated Mohammedan woman had ended her existence. The men relatives and friends followed the body to the grave and the women beat their breasts and tore their hair according to the custom. In the home was left a bright-eyed little girl with charming dimpled cheeks and, unusual in a Persian child, curly hair. The husband keenly felt the loss of his wife, but the child was inconsolable. Offers of flashy brass jewelry, brilliant glass ornaments or a brightly-hued house chaddar were of no avail, for she wept heartbrokenly for her mother.

Soon the father married again, and the new wife had no patience with the child's tears. What good was a Mohammedan woman, anyway? Was her life not worse than a dog's, and would not one mother do just as well as another?

One day the child's longing for her mother became uncontrollable and she burst into tears, thus aggravating the new wife who seized a club and, beating the child very severely, said, "I will teach you not to cry for your mother!" When the father came home he saw the bruised face and body of his usually sunshiny little daughter of whom he was very fond, and he said "I will take you away to school." The wife promised not to abuse the child and the threat was not carried out. They moved to a new place. Some time after-

wards after an unusually severe beating, the child's pitiable condition aroused the father again, and he took her to the Mission school.

The man was a photographer, very rare in a Moslem, and was much addicted to strong drink. He knew that his health, work and life were suffering from the effects of the liquor, but he craved it and yielded to the craving.

As he sat talking to the principal of the school, begging that his daughter be not simply admitted, but adopted so as to insure a permanent home for her, the tears streamed down his face, as he confessed his weakness. Sobs shook him as he begged that the missionary give him some medicine which would take away his curse. She could only point him to the All Powerful Healer, but the man had no moral strength left with which to believe. How she longed for a McAuley to keep hold of that man until he should find the Savior.

So T—— became a pupil in the Boarding School. She was very bright and being sunny and winning, was soon a general favorite with the girls. Within a few weeks she had learned to read, and when they brought her word that her father was bedridden she took home her precious New Testament which she had earned as a reward for finishing the little

Turkish "Sweet Story of Old," the first reading book in the school, and comforted her father in his last hours by reading from it.

He grew better, and T—— returned to the school, but the change was only for a day or two, and he died just at the door of a hospital where he was being taken in a dreadful fit of delirium tremens. The last weeks of illness and no work had eaten up all the furnishings of the home and studio, and the wife came begging for help for the simple burial. T—— did not wait at home through the burial feast but ran away to school, throwing herself into the principal's arms, sobbing out her misery and fear lest she be turned out of the school.

The women relatives came asking that T—— return home, but as a friend of the father, a prominent Mohammedan of the city, called asking that the child be kept in the school as it was the father's last wish, she was encouraged to stay on. The principal was working towards "self-support" in the Boarding Department, and had already over-stretched the expanding power of the allowance which her Board had been able to send, but her heart said, "We **must** keep this child. Our Lord of the Treasury will provide!" and the child was assured of a home as long as she felt inclined to stay.

She was old for her years and was soon grasping the spiritual truths which she was reading. Her advance in her lessons was remarkable. Just about a year after T— — entered the school the principal was handed a note, which read, "My Dear teacher Miss ——. Please I want to give my name to church if you don't want, say to me. I will be very glad. your loving puple, T ——."

Can you imagine the joy, the humility, the fear that nearly overpowered that missionary? Years ago she had prayed for Moslem pupils. She had watched them steal in through the back alley gate, had seen how they had endured ridicule for attending a Christian school even very irregularly. She knew that the times were greatly changed, but she remembered the days of fasting and prayer that had been kept "for religious liberty in Persia, so that the people might accept Christ." She knew of the one man who had suffered torture and a slow death in a horrible Persian dungeon because he had dared to confess Christ before men! She knew of others who had fled to safety in Bulgaria. And T— —! What if—? Some time before she had rejoiced that T—— had found her Savior and that her everyday life was showing it, but she had not dared to dream that T—— was ready to take that public step to join the church which no

Moslem woman dares attend! So with fear and trembling mixed with great joy, she called T—— to her office and told her that while she was very happy over the decision, T—— must consider the cost very carefully. Then after questioning to know if T—— fully realized what were the fundamentals of the Christian belief, and to hear her confess her faith, the principal kindly but vividly described the persecutions and deaths suffered by converts in both heathen and Mohammedan countries, and mincing no words, told T—— that she might have to suffer in some similar way. She told her that while the American missionaries would do all they could to protect her, the law was such that if she should be demanded by the Mohammedan government they would be powerless to keep her. She listened unafraid and said, "But they could only kill my body."

It was night. The light from the oil lamp left spooky shadows in the room. The office clock ticked ominously, and there were sounds of footsteps outside. The principal said, "Listen! Suppose those are men now to take you!" T—— half turned toward the door and said, "What would they ask me?" The answer came, "They might tell you that you must not believe in Jesus, that you must not say that He is the Son of God, that you must renounce your faith." "But," she said so

simply and earnestly, "when I do believe, how can I say that I do not!"

Within a few days an Armenian girl, her boon companion, also applied for church membership, and within a couple of weeks four others. One day T—— came with long eyelashes wet from crying, and said to the principal, "The Mohammedan girls have been talking to me and say that if I join the church there will be a disturbance, perhaps the school will be closed, and that they will all have to leave the school! If this is true, perhaps I had better not join."

Before the principal rose the picture of the forty Mohammedan girls and young women who were enduring more or less ridicule and opposition because they were attending school, but the Master has taught us to confess Him before men, so she answered that the school was running that very risk all the time, because it was established only that the Savior might reign in the hearts of the pupils. Then fearing that the child herself might be wavering the principal urged the necessity of counting the cost to the full before undertaking the step. But the child smilingly looked into the principal's face and answered, "It is not for myself that I am thinking, I am not afraid. Let them do to me what they will, I want to be a follower of Jesus."

T—— with her five companions appeared before the Session of the church at the next meeting, and successfully passed the examination.

This ends the first chapter. T—— says she hopes to bring many of her companions to her Master. You readers who believe in prayer, will you pray, not only that she stand faithful in persecution, but that she may be steadfast in her desire and that she may be the means of bringing many to the Kingdom?

Told by Miss Mary E. Bradford, M.D.

A BRIBE.

The evening prayers were finished at Whipple Hospital and I sat by the bedside of my Kurdish patient. Thinking of her home in the villages of Kurdistan, I said to her, "How did you come to the city?" Her face darkened and her eyes flashed as she vehemently exclaimed "O Hakim Khonum, ask me not. Let it never be told!" I had not expected so fierce an outbreak and waited for the story which she poured forth. "My father with his brother and another man were owners of a village, and when father died some trouble arose as to the property. It was referred to the Crown Prince who

lived at Tabriz and was governor of the province. One day my uncle came to my mother and said he must take me and his own daughter of my own age as a present to the Crown Prince so he would decide in his favor. My mother answered if she had to beg her bread in the streets at night she would not give her daughter. I was wild as the goats and when my cousin, who had heard what her father had said, came and told me, I ran and hid for three days in the darkest corner of the under-ground stable. Then they came and dragged me out. My uncle took me on his horse in front of him, and my cousin rode with her older brother in the same way. We started for the great city and I left my mother frantic with grief, screaming and beating her head, while the women tried to restrain her.

On the fourth day we rode up to the palace and word was sent in that there were two little maids, presents for His Royal Highness, at the gate. The answer came back to send them to the women's apartments, and so we entered the household of the Crown Prince. With sixteen others I was assigned the duty of patting His Royal Highness at night, so he would sleep comfortably. Eight were on duty each night, and we sat four on a side. We did not dare to speak and if we felt a cough or a sneeze coming we had to jump

up and run out. If in any way we disturbed him he sent for the servant whose work it was to whip the women and we were beaten. Besides the night work I was the especial slave of the oldest son, then a boy of about fourteen. He kept me running from morning till night and if sometimes, from sheer exhaustion, I dropped down and fell asleep, do you think there was anyone in that great house to say, 'Let her alone, she is tired, poor child!' Hakim Khonum, there is more love in this Hospital in a week than in that palace in a year. Sometimes we would agree not to let the Crown Prince sleep until he gave us a present, and then he would promise us some money in the morning, but it never came.

"If I had been good-looking like my cousin, I might have fared better for, as we grew up, she was desired by one of the army officers and the Crown Prince gave her to him. When the Shah died, and His Royal Highness went to Teheran to be king he could not take us all with him. I was left behind and given to a man as his third wife. He was not good to me but he let me come here and with God's blessing I shall be well." Did your uncle get the village? "Yes, but he lost it again very soon, was it not the price of blood?" And your mother, have you ever seen her? "Yes, she came and

worked for a time in the harem, but she could not stand it here, and returned home and died." The fierceness had gone from her eyes and voice, but my heart burned for her as I said good-night. Under Islam the little girl was counted as nothing but a bribe.

Told by Mrs. Loretta C. Van Hook.

The mass of Persian women are so unaccustomed to fix their minds upon any subject requiring thought, that all instruction must be of the simplest kind and given line upon line, precept upon precept, over and over again, and much time is required before one apprehends the truth.

A Mohammedan priest of venerable and patriarchal aspect was led to Christ through reading the Scriptures, a copy of the Testament having been put into his and by a colporteur. He was anxious his wife should accept the Gospel also but her heart was steeled against the Truth, for she had seen her husband dragged from home at dead of night and thrown into the secret dungeon of the king for the crime of being a Christian, and had beheld one of his friends dragged through the streets and beaten until he died from the effects, for the same crime, and she was terrified,

but finally became an attendant upon the meetings of the mission, although apparently untouched for several years.

One day a number of Moslem women were gathered for a little meeting, among them one who, better than any of the others, could remember what was said and repeat it. At the close she was going over the talk that had been given, in a manner that showed plainly her pride in her gift of understanding and memory, so the missionary said to her, "Fatima, I am glad you remember so well what I have read but it will do you no good if you do not believe it and receive it into your heart." At these words the face of the priest's wife lighted up and in her almost sightless eyes a new light gleamed as she exclaimed, "Is that all, Khanum (lady)? I cannot repeat what you say to us as Fatima and others can but I can and do believe." She had found the truth at last.

There was a little Koordish woman whose husband had accepted the Saviour, but with whom it was difficult to talk because of difference in language. One day she came to a missionary asking to borrow a small sum of money to pay a debtor that was annoying her. It was a trifling sum and the missionary gave it to her and then seized the opportunity to tell her of

her debt to God and how Jesus had paid it all. The two had so little language in common that a long, long time was spent before the woman could understand. At last she comprehended and looking up excitedly, said, "Is that what it means to be a Christian?" "Yes," was the reply, and she said, "Well, then, I believe on Christ." After awhile she said, "Do you not love me better than you did before I believed on Jesus? I love you a great deal better than I did."

"By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

In after time she often spoke of "that day at your house when I first believed in Jesus."

Told by Mrs. F. M. Stead, M.D.

THE BEGINNING OF THE PASSING OF THE VEIL.

In certain parts of Persia a spirit of comparative liberty has come upon the women. While in Dolatabad I was invited to dine with a lady of rank. I took our native pastor with me, thinking that, of course, he would be given his dinner in the men's department. To my surprise he was brought in with me. Dinner was laid, and the lady, her two daughters and

daughter-in-law sat down with faces uncovered. The son and son-in-law came in and had after-dinner tea with us. I spoke of it being unusual and the lady said: "We and many of the ladies of Dolatabad have adopted European ways just as far as we can at present." Another lady in the same town received Mr. Stead with me and sat and talked with him for a long while. She sent her thirteen-year-old daughter to the Boys' School all the time I was there to look after her. Of course, when there were only men teachers she could not do that. At the house of an Aboud—i. e., one of the people who wear big white turbans,—I was received by the lady, her daughter, her son and his wife, a younger son and his fianceé, whereas it has been an almost unheard-of thing for a young man to see his fianceé until after she is his wife, and except among the villagers a woman covers her face from her brother-in-law.

The Dolatabad School.

The opening of the school for Moslem boys in Dolatabad shows the new attitude towards education, and the estimate in which the schools of the Presbyterian Mission are held, as well as the confidence the people have in the missionaries. Several village owners decided that they would rather have a school in the little

town near their own villages than send their sons to Teheran or Hamadan to school. One of them looked up the various possibilities in the way of schools, and decided that the American school was the best thing possible. He collected some 800 Tomans (one Toman is $1.54) in cash and something more in promises, and took a trip to Hamadan to present the matter to the missionaries. The money was placed in the bank to the credit of the Station, and a paper was given putting the whole control of the school in the hands of the missionaries and the whole support of it on the people. The Khan himself accompanied us to Dolatabad, got up a meeting in the interest of education, at which several of the leading men of the town as well as Mr. Stead spoke, and at the opening of school gave the boys a treat of candy. There are some forty-five boys in the school—all Moslem, all from good families and all pay pupils.

A Letter From a Friend.

I wrote to a professional friend, one of the more educated of the native doctors. I said in substance, "I wish you could see your way clear to accepting the whole of Christianity, as you have part of it. Then you would put away those extra wives—who in the sight of God are not your

wives at all, for God gave only one wife to a man—and would serve God in joy and purity." He replied, I received your truthful letter. You are right in all your writing, but we are like an old tree that has been wasted by the vicissitudes of the weather. It is bent and cannot be made straight without being broken in pieces. Then the day of such a tree is past. We must bear our struggle to those untried branches which can be made straight with a little care. I have done what I was able to do. I advised the people and they took my advice. They confided their children to your care. Prepare them for what you propose to me. Make them able to understand you. The Lord's love is spread in the schools."

There is a German adage: "Whatever you would have in the life of a people, put into the schools." The missionary realizes the truth of this. Miss Bartlett writes: "I look upon the education of the Persian girls as one of the most influential and vital, as well as one of the most powerful factors in the future welfare of Persia. Some are exceedingly pessimistic about the future of Persia, and seem to believe that our chance has passed. I don't believe it myself, but not being the least relation to a prophet I don't know one thing about the future. Only I know we

must not withhold now if we ever hope to have a harvest. You remember how Paul rebuked those who stopped working while waiting for the Lord to come. It seems to me we will be terribly negligent if, from fear of coming disaster, we stop work or fail to push on. Just as sure as the ultimate triumph of Christ's kingdom is a certainty, just so surely must we do all in our power to establish it here in Satan's very stronghold."

How long shall Persia be a polygamous Mohammedan country? Just so long as the Christian world fails in grasping its opportunity to send out enough missionaries, men and women consecrated to God, to give the message of salvation to the world with its wide-open doors, over one-half of which is still in the darkness of heathenism.

The Christian life is a call to labor, it is one of activity. When translated from death unto life one cannot be idle. If it is not for you or me to go to "the uttermost parts of the earth" it is our duty to help send others, for, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent." "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."

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